

THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

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The contemporary artist's concepts and methods of working--often bewildering to a public accustomed to traditional modes of expression--are illuminated in the exhibition, "Materials and Techniques of 20th-Century Artists," on view at the Cleveland Museum of Art from November 17 through January 2, 1977. Installed in the Museum's classroom level exhibition area, the show runs concurrent with and is designed to complement the Museum's annual May Show of works by Western Reserve artists.

The exhibition examines the principal factors which have shaped contemporary art: the development in this century of a wide variety of synthetic materials and new technologies; and the eagerness of artists to experiment with these new materials and processes, as well as to use traditional materials in novel ways.

The new directions taken by contemporary sculpture, painting, and printmaking are illustrated in this exhibition by forty-two works by internationally known and Cleveland area artists. Approximately half are from the Museum's collections; the remaining works are on loan from artists and private collectors.

The exhibition was organized under the direction of Gabriel P. Weisberg, Museum Curator of Art History and Education. Research, selection of art works, design and installation of the exhibition, and catalog preparation were done by Cleveland State University art history students Dee Driscoll and Dorothy Ross with the assistance of Andrew Chakalis and Karen Smith of the Museum's Extensions Division.

(more)

2-20th-century artists

The section of the exhibition dealing with sculpture demonstrates how steel, aluminum, and various plastics (epoxy resin and plexiglas) have been used by sculptors to fashion strong, lightweight or flexible forms that would have been impossible to achieve using traditional materials, such as marble or bronze. The properties of these newer materials are displayed in works by David Davis, Richard Hunt, Frederick Hollendonner, Ernest Trova, Hans Breder, Frank Gallo, and John Clague. Electric works by Claudio Marzollo, Boyd Mefferd and Julio LeParc explore the movement and color range of light.

Some sculptors have carried out their ideas using commonplace objects and old established materials. Joseph Cornell has assembled his mysterious box, entitled Video, from a variety of everyday objects. Clay and glass, materials traditionally associated with crafts, are used in Richard Schneider's abstract sculpture, Female Form, and in Gene Kangas's Game.

Searching for quick-drying paints that could be applied rapidly to large surfaces, painters have turned from oil and tempera pigments to house paints and acrylics. The luminosity and brilliance of acrylic paint is displayed in Don Eddy's photo-realistic painting, New Shoes for H, and in Julian Stanczak's exploration of the optical properties of light and color, Filtered Yellow.

The versatility of acrylic paint, the fact that it can be used thick or thin, gives artists the option of brushing, spraying, or pouring it on the canvas, as demonstrated in works by David Haberman, Mark Scherer and Rose Ann Sassano. Taking acrylics a step further are Robert Davis, who paints on plexiglas, and William Ruffer, who "weaves" his paintings from polyethylene strips painted with rhoplex.

Collage, an old craft developed by the Cubists into an art form, remains popular with painters. A composition by Dean Drahos employs papers of varying textures stitched together on a sewing machine. In Odalisque, Winston McGee covers styrofoam shapes with canvas, to which he attaches burlap, cloth and rope.

3-20th-century artists

One of the most revolutionary and interesting developments in contemporary art is the shaped canvas. This medium, which lies in an area between painting and sculpture, is illustrated by Tom Yody's Untitled No. 1, in which shaped pieces of wood are covered with canvas cloth and painted white. Edwin Mieczkowski eschews the use of paint and canvas entirely, making his artistic statement through an arrangement of masonite-covered wood forms. Vivien Abrams reverses the traditional relationship between canvas and frame. In her composition of canvas and wood strips, it is the wood that is painted; the canvas remains untouched.

In the last two decades, many painters and sculptors have turned to printmaking, both for its creative possibilities and as a means of reaching a wider audience. Their approach to printmaking has been largely experimental. A lithograph by George Segal is printed on metallic paper; one by Lee Bontecou is printed on cloth. Robert Rauschenberg, Alex Katz, Paul Wong, and Ben Schonzeit incorporate photographic images in their prints. Alan Shields weaves, stitches, and glues dyed and screen-printed papers to produce a work that is fascinating both front and back. Perhaps the most unusual approach is that of Garner Tullis who uses metal dies to stamp out and mold paper images that could be classified as sculpture. Also exhibiting original points of view are screen prints by Josef Albers and B. J. Kitaj and prints executed in mixed techniques by James Rosenquist and Carol Summers.

The illustrated catalog which accompanies this exhibition--made possible by a grant from the John P. Murphy Foundation--not only describes the processes employed in the making of each of these works, but also provides some insights into the motivations of the artists who created them.

Lectures on the changing nature of contemporary art, including visits to this exhibition and the May Show, are offered at 7:30 p.m. on three Wednesday evenings, December 1, 8 and 15.

For additional information or photographs, please contact Ann Edwards, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340.